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BOOK REVIEWS.

SPINOZA'S POLITICAL AND ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY. By Robert A. Duff, M.A., Lecturer on Moral and Political Philosophy in the University of Glasgow. Glasgow: James Macleod and Sons. 1903, pp. x, 516.

In his preface Mr. Duff informs his readers that the present work is only part of a larger undertaking upon which he has been engaged for many years, and which he hopes to complete with a critical and historical account of the sources of Spinoza's thought and its influence upon later thinkers. "This volume, however, forms a whole by itself, and attempts what seems the most pressing need in connection with Spinoza's philosophy, namely, an exposition of his ideas in their mutual relations, and an account, more or less systematic, of his view of the world and man" (p. vii). Mr. Duff has brought to his task an intimate knowledge of his author, an eminently sympathetic power of interpretation, and a living interest in the questions at issue. The result is a book of remarkable freshness, full of interest and stimulus, both for students of philosophy and for the wider circle of those who wish to know the outcome of the work of a great thinker upon moral, social, and religious questions.

As a preparation for the elucidation of Spinoza's ethical and political philosophy, Mr. Duff devotes the first half dozen chapters of his book to an exposition of his author's general philosophical position. These chapters contain an abundance of good things, and throw a suggestive light upon more than one point of difficulty. This, however, only heightens my regret that Mr. Duff has not seen his way to give a fuller and more systematic account of Spinoza's metaphysics. The adoption of Mr. Duff's interpretation involves a considerable modification of current views concerning Spinoza, while the limits to which he has restricted himself do not allow more than an indication of the writer's position without the discussion necessary for its justification. It may perhaps appear ungracious to immediately demand more of an author who has just given us a volume of over five hundred pages and who announces his intention of supplementing it with others. But Mr. Duff's mode of treatment is itself symptomatic of his fundamental conception of

Spinoza's work, and is not dictated solely by limits of space. He holds that Spinoza's metaphysic is itself only incidental to his practical philosophy, and would on this ground justify its merely incidental exposition. "Spinoza," we are told, "had no interest in metaphysics for its own sake, while he was passionately interested in moral and political problems. He was a metaphysician at all only in the sense that he was resolute in thinking *out* the ideas, principles, and categories which are interwoven with all our practical endeavor, and the proper understanding of which is the condition of human welfare" (p. viii). It was only "because a man cannot love the good unless he knows it, that he was interested in speculative problems at all" (p. 236). But surely this definite subordination of Spinoza's metaphysics, which is central for Mr. Duff's interpretation of him, itself stands in need of further explanation and support. As understood and employed by Mr. Duff, it seems to me to lead to a one-sided view of his thought and a quite undue depreciation of the more logical and formal influences by which it was moulded. Spinoza has doubtless suffered much from the tendency of historians of philosophy to direct attention too exclusively to this side of his work to the neglect of its more concrete development in his treatment of the moral and social life. The geometrical method, a few metaphysical definitions, and the proposition that all determination is negation, have too often been represented as his entire philosophical stock in trade. It is well to be reminded that he gave to the world a philosophy of morals as well as a metaphysic, and worked out a theory of the State as well as a method of thought procedure. Mr. Duff has succeeded, too, in showing, I think, that valuable light can be thrown upon his fundamental conceptions themselves from his applications of them to moral and social life. Still we cannot afford on that account to lay on one side or too treat as of slight significance the logical and more formal side of his system. Yet this is what Mr. Duff appears to do. Of the method we are told that it was probably regarded by Spinoza as "a more directly convincing mode of statement rather than a more cogent kind of proof" (p. 4). We are asked to regard the definitions which stand in the forefront of the Ethics as merely the "media" of his thought, from which it is important to distinguish his "ideas" and "principles," on the ground that "both the terms and the meanings they bear in his system are to be

found in other writers antecedent and contemporary with him? (p. 3). It is of course the most important function of the critic to distinguish between the living pulses of a writer's thought, upon which the special significance of his work depends, and the merely traditional modes of thought and expression which he employs. I cannot, however, see any justification for such a wholesale clearance of metaphysical baggage as Mr. Duff prescribes, or admit the validity of the criterion suggested for the separation of the vital from the non-vital elements. If such a test is to be applied, it must at all events be applied fairly all round. Thus, in Spinoza's case, the identification of reality and perfection, which Mr. Duff treats as an essential element in his thought, must follow the rest of the definitions. The truth, of course, is that none of the definitions really have the same meaning in the hands of less comprehensive thinkers that they have as elements in Spinoza's system. As Mr. Duff says, "What is peculiar to him is the power and insight with which he fuses into a coherent whole, elements drawn from very different and divergent schools of thought, and quickens old materials with new life by setting them in fresh relations." What I would urge is, that we should not begin our attempt to understand his system by setting aside one half of the materials, and that our final judgment upon its coherence must be mainly based upon Spinoza's ability or inability to harmonize the logical and ethical motives of his thought in his conception of reality. Looking at the system exclusively from its more concrete side, Mr. Duff naturally does not find many of the difficulties which have perplexed other expositors. To them it has often seemed that while aiming at a conception of reality as a concrete unity realized in differences the imperfections of his Logic often lead Spinoza to treat the unity as merely abstract. For Mr. Duff, if I understand him aright, there is no such ambiguity. The unity is throughout concrete. Similarly, some of the difficulties which have seemed to surround Spinoza's treatment of error and evil have no place in his interpretation.

Mr. Duff's exposition of Spinoza's views of man and the state seems to me a thoroughly good piece of work. He insists strongly on the necessity of reading together the ethics and the political treatises, if we would grasp the whole of Spinoza's moral theory. "Many of the problems which force themselves upon a student of the former work find an answer only in the

latter, such questions as, the relation of the individual to society, the nature of rights, the function of law, the end and conditions of government, the connection between moral character and civic patriotism, the arguments for free thought, free speech, and religious toleration, and the relation of Church and State" (p. 4). The supreme function of the State is in fact to establish and maintain those conditions of life without which the supreme good of man, as determined in the Ethics, cannot be realized. In his account of the too often neglected political works Mr. Duff has succeeded to a remarkable extent in revivifying Spinoza's thought. He makes us appreciate the breadth and sanity of his view. He brings out the constant reference of all his political thinking to the psychological nature of man, which constitutes the special strength and interest of his work in a region of thought in which fictions have secured so large a following.

In conclusion, as an illustration of the novelty and illuminating character of some of Mr. Duff's interpretations, I would draw attention to his manner of disposing of a difficulty which has proved a stumbling-block to most of Spinoza's commentators. Having defined *cupiditas* as *appetitus* with the consciousness of it, Spinoza proceeds, "Whether a man is conscious of his *appetitus* or not, the *appetitus* still remains one and the same." This has, as far as I am aware, been universally held to imply that there is no essential difference between self-conscious human desires and blind propensions. Spinoza's meaning, Mr. Duff contends, is the very opposite of what is supposed. "What Spinoza is contending is not that there is no difference between *appetitus* in general and human desire, but that there is no difference between a humanum appetitum et cupiditatem." . . . Spinoza's argument is that consciousness is itself part of that essential difference by which man is distinguished from other objects, and that all impulses, whether they are consciously present to the mind or not, are intrinsically different in man from what they are in anything else, and admit of being thought and willed" (p. 79).

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